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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: TAIWAN'S POLITICAL SITUATION, U.S.-TAIWAN
RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage December 8 on Taiwan's winning the third gold medal in the Asian Games in Doha Thursday; and on the Taipei and Kaohsiung mayoral elections, which are slated for Saturday, December 9. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's largest-circulation daily, ran a banner headline on page four that said "Regardless of [Mayoral] Election Outcomes, Bian Wants Premier Su to Stay on in His Current Position." In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News" discussed tomorrow's elections, calling them a chance for the light-Green voters to make a choice between the "pro-Bian line" and the "Non-Bian line." An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," on the other hand, discussed a plan by the Washington-based Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) to campaign to have future AIT Taipei directors go through the full, formal Senate confirmation process. The article expressed disapproval of such a plan and said "Taiwan gains nothing by appearing to be the one who is destabilizing the situation." End summary.

¶2. Taiwan's Political Situation

"Will the DPP Be Able to Jump out of the 'Chen Shui-bian Vortex'?"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (12/8):

"People will cast votes tomorrow. Some people called tomorrow's elections a vote of confidence for Chen Shui-bian and Ma Ying-jeou. But such a statement seems to have underestimated and oversimplified the significance of the elections. As a matter of fact, Saturday's elections are not merely a 'race between the Blue and the Green camps,' namely, an opportunity for the voters to pick their side from the two political labels: Ma and Chen. Instead, the light-Green voters, who are exasperated at the DPP's failure really to achieve anything, will have to make a choice between the 'pro-Bian line' and the 'non-Bian line.' ..."

"Chen's corruption scandals have almost become the only agenda for this year's Taipei and Kaohsiung mayoral elections. But this is just a facade. The real problem lies in the fact that over the past decade, particularly the six-and-a-half-year reign of Chen, Taiwan is facing a split national identity, collapsed constitutional system, deteriorating cross-Strait relations, dismantled mutual trust between Taiwan and the United States, confounded right and wrong in society, the island's marginalization, an opaque economic situation, and suffering of the people -- it is as if the entire nation and society have sunk into a dirty, muddy vortex that gets people nowhere. Will Taiwan be able to jump out of the vortex after the elections?"

¶3. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

"FAPA's Misguided Pie in the Sky"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (12/8):

".... The Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA), an influential pro-independence lobby in the US, has announced that it is starting a campaign to make the directors of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) - the de facto US embassy - go through confirmation hearings in the US Senate. To examine this idea, we must set aside reality, after elucidating what that reality is: FAPA's campaign has no chance of success.

"If the AIT director had to go through a Senate confirmation hearing, he would enjoy all of the prestige and glory that comes with having one's personal history ripped to shreds for partisan blood sport, as 'real' ambassadors do. How wonderful. More to the point, it would also mean that the pro-China lobby would have a voice in determining who conducted diplomacy with Taiwan. How does that help anyone? Taiwan is pretty lucky to have a real diplomat - AIT Director Stephen Young - as it is. Most countries get saddled with political cronies whose qualifications are determined by how much money they donated to the US president's campaign fund. Taiwan gains nothing by appearing to be the one who is destabilizing the situation. The country's power and influence come from holding the moral high ground, not undermining it."

YOUNG